

**SENEGAL
MAY 2010**

By Karen Hauptfleisch



Our bus to Dakar

25 May. The Rosso border crossing is notorious for harassment so we stayed calm while several people shouted at us. We got another Codliver who insisted on getting in the taxi with us for 3 km and then we calmly informed him that we would take a minibus instead of paying him commission for a taxi. So we waited patiently with our luggage securely on top of the minibus. I had a whole bag of peanuts to peel and eat, filled in countless sudokus, read my novel for the second time and waited - all and all for a whole 9 hours before my sense of humour faded away. We finally left at 22h00 and a nerve wrecking 270 km followed with the driver's door unable to close

properly, resulting in him slamming it every few kilometers. The only way to get the driver to stop was to bang on the outside, so the banging followed us for 14 hours.

26 May. Having to pay some money on the way to some policeman didn't improve my sense of humour and when we arrived in Dakar at 8h00, we were dropped off amongst a lot of shouting. Our co-driver hauled our luggage onto a city truck which sped away. Alan, myself and a fellow passenger ran after it, got hold of the ladder and I climbed to the top of the roof while the others hung on for their lives. I was determined not to become part of the bag snatching statistics. Our next taxi driver once again couldn't speak English but got us to the Gambia Embassy and we walked to the hotel close by where I almost collapsed on a bench, my nerves shot. The banging throughout the night was still ringing in my ears and we had been swamped by beggars. I desperately needed a shower and some quiet time. It's been 9 hours of waiting and twelve hours of driving, with thousands of people shouting at us in between and a couple of Codlivers to try and avoid.

27 May. After a shower and some sleep, I could handle the harassment a lot better and we left Dakar around 14h00, looking forward to a nice guesthouse and meal around 21h00. But this is Africa, so we ended up sharing a room with a creepy guy who thought I had beautiful hair, a red light in his room and I shared the bathroom with 6 huge cockroaches (not counting the small ones). We also shared the building with his neighbour, whose door banged non stop throughout the couple of hours left before daylight. Stuffing toilet paper in my ears didn't work.

28 May. Another territorial fight in Tambacounda with the 6 huge cockroaches followed but a lack of sleep made me strong so I had my shower. Then we were off to Kedogou where no one knew where the highest peak in Senegal was. Using the character we have built up during the past weeks, we took a deep breath and had a couple of ice cold beers.

Rejuvenated, we arranged for a translator (our musician) and a vehicle. Armed with GPS coordinates we knew more or less where we had to go. The mosquitoes went crazy in the heat but all was well in Africa



On our way to the mountain

Sunrise on Africa's Peaks - Senegal



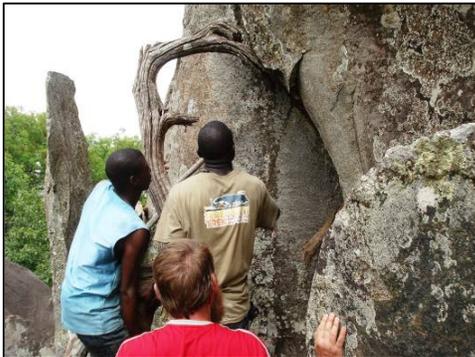
The start of the hike to the top

29 May. After stopping for food, we were finally on our way by 7h00. The journey was pleasant, with nice music all along and the thought of dancing on top of Senegal's highest peak crossed my mind. A guide escorted us from Nepen Peull on the steep slope. I was looking for a big boulder I had read about and when we finally found it, my heart fell. The only way to get to the top was through a small crack. Luckily I have lost some weight and there was already one branch wedged in the crack. That could get me 2 meters up. Standing on the guys shoulders could add another meter. Our guide got the idea and came back with another 2 branches. It was time for me to act brave. Donating lots of skin, I finally got my body wedged in the crack and chimneyed to the top. I hauled out

the flag and shouted at Alan to take pictures before sliding down, donating more skin. It was anything but ladylike. Once down, it took a while before my knees stopped shaking. More pictures were taken since I looked like I'd been in a war zone. The hike back was pleasant and we listened to more music driving back.

Everyone was inspired by the teamwork and our musician was determined to write a rap song about the mountain.

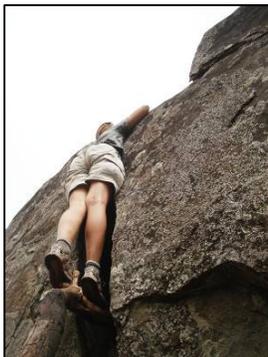
The next morning, we traveled back to Temba and then on to Velingore. The Gambia awaited and I needed some time for my scars to heal.



The start of the teamwork.



Getting ready so I can climb



Standing on top of the branches



That is the top!

Sunrise on Africa's Peaks - Senegal



On top! Before sliding down



The top from a different angle



Busses, taxis, motorbikes and finally, a horse cart – all in a day's travel